THE TENNESSEE WARBLER

Newsletter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society

December, 2024 Editor, Theresa Graham

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall has arrived in Tennessee. Leaves are turning, migrants have passed through, and winter visitors are arriving. The Memphis chapter hosted the Fall Meeting last month. Many TOS members joined to enjoy the field trips and scientific talks that were organized. Thank you, Memphis, for a terrific Fall Meeting! **I am happy to announce that Chattanooga will host the 2025 Spring Meeting May 2nd – 4th**. Please join us for a wonderful weekend of spring birding! I am also pleased to share with you that the **Elizabethton Bird Club will host the 2025 Fall Meeting September 26th – 28th.** At the Fall Meeting in Memphis, the TOS Board of Directors established a rotation for Spring meetings. Spring rotations will begin in 2025 with Chattanooga, followed by Kingsport in 2026, Memphis in 2027, Knoxville in 2028 and Nashville in 2029. This rotation will allow the largest chapters to share the responsibility of hosting Fall Meetings and will allow members to plan their trips and to enjoy all of Tennessee's beautiful regions.

TOS remains strong financially and memberships remain high. Despite widespread inflation, TOS has worked to keep our expenses down. We have already moved *The Tennessee Warbler* to digital only, and beginning in Spring 2025, we will also move *The Migrant* to digital only. These moves have and will continue to save TOS money and allow us to focus our resources on bird conservation, research and education. These moves allowed TOS to support 8 exceptional projects totaling $20,000.

TOS is looking for a volunteer to take over the TOS Facebook page and to create and link an Instagram page to the site. We hope to find a digital-savvy member (or two!) who would be interested in posting bird-related articles to inform current members and to let others know of TOS. If you are interested or know of someone who might be, please email me at collinsm@rhodes.edu.

Lastly, I would like to share an uplifting piece of conservation news regarding the Guam Kingfisher. Due to the invasive brown tree snake, the population had dwindled to only 29 individuals in the mid-80s. In 1986, the 29 remaining individuals were captured, and the species has not been seen in the wild since. A captive breeding program initiated with these 29 individuals, and population has grown to nearly 150 individuals today. In September 2024, with help from The Nature Conservancy, a small group of six individuals was released on Cooper Island as a test site. If efforts prove to be successful, more will be released in the future.

Enjoy your fall and winter birding!
Warmly,
Michael Collins
President, TOS

TOS SPRING STATE MEETING
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE
MAY 2-4, 2025

The Chattanooga Chapter of TOS is looking forward to hosting the annual spring meeting on May 2-4, 2025. Early May should be an excellent time for field trips and visiting our beautiful city.

Our hotel headquarters will be the Downtown Courtyard by Marriott, and our Saturday evening dinner and keynote address will be just down the street at Puckett's Restaurant.

We're happy to announce that Dr. David Aborn, professor and ornithologist at the University of Tennessee in Chattanooga, will give our keynote address titled, "What's in a Name? Background and Discussion on the Proposed Changes to North American Bird Names."

More details to follow.

OJ Morgan, President

2024 FALL MEETING REPORT

The **MEMPHIS CHAPTER** hosted TOS's annual Fall Meeting September 27-29, 2024. TOS members didn't let the rainy weather that weekend keep them from traversing the state of Tennessee and attending what was a fun weekend of field trips, socialization, and education.

The Saturday afternoon presentations included:

- Parental Investment and Selection on Offspring Sex Ratios in Birds, presented by Dr. Keith Bowers, University of Memphis faculty

- Disentangling the Relationship Between Personality, Sickness Behaviors, and Pathogen Transmission, using House Finches, presented by Julia Weil, University of Memphis PhD candidate

- Research findings from habitat modifications and radio tagging of migratory shorebirds, a Delta Wind Birds Indianola, MS-based project, presented by biologists Hal Mitchell and Kristina Mitchell

Fall Bird Count Data Due Now

The Fall Count data are due as soon as you can get them to me. Besides the actual bird data, please remember to include the following effort data:

1 - Hours and miles by car, foot, and any night-birding

2 - Number of observers and parties

3 - Any feeder watching hours & names

4 - Start and end times for the count

5 - Weather data for the count

6 - Names of all the participants

7 - Anything else about the count, i.e., record high or low numbers, extraordinary weather, all-time species total for your count, etc

As always, TOS thanks the participants and compilers for their efforts in these surveys to help monitor our birdlife. These data are important, and your efforts are much appreciated.

Ron Hoff • TOS State Count Compiler
166 Chahyga Way • Loudon, TN 37774
webe2brdrs@gmail.com

RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER DOWNLISTED

In late October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) downlisted the Red-cockaded Woodpecker from Endangered to Threatened status under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This outcome was the result of five decades of cooperative conservation efforts between the USFWS, other federal agencies (e.g., USDA and Defense Department), private landowners, native tribes, state agencies, businesses, utilities, and engaged conservation organizations.

Back in the late 1970s, this woodpecker's populations were at an all-time low of about 1,470 clusters of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. (A "cluster" is considered a group of cavity pine trees used by one or more of these woodpeckers.) Today, the USFWS estimates there are 7,800 clusters ranging across 11 states from southern Virginia to eastern Texas.

While the Red-cockaded Woodpecker's status has certainly improved, the species has still not fully recovered. The Service will have to continue working with partners to help the Red-cockaded Woodpecker advance toward a full and stable recovery.

Source: The Birding Community E-Bulletin November 2024.

You can access an archive of past e-bulletins on the website of the National Wildlife Refuge Association: https://www.refugeassociation.org/birding-community-e-bulletin

Guidelines for Tennessee Ornithological Society Conservation and Research Grants

The Tennessee Ornithological Society invites applications for Conservation and Research Grants to support projects that will directly or indirectly help to protect the birds of Tennessee, increase scientific knowledge, or educate others about the importance of Tennessee's birds. A total of $15,000 is available to be awarded for the grants, which may be divided among multiple recipients.

Anyone with a bird-related project, including students, professionals, and individual workers, may compete for a grant. The project may already be in progress at the time of application. Applicants should submit a project proposal using the form that is available on the TOS website (https://tnbirds.org/grants-and-awards/). Needed information includes: name, address, telephone, E-mail address, topic, problem to be addressed, objectives, expected results and significance, project location, beginning and ending dates, estimated field time, estimated total cost of project, itemized budget, funds available from other sources, how grant is to be used, experience of applicant in the project area, willingness of applicant to share results at a statewide TOS meeting, and whether the work is under the guidance of a mentor or is independent.

A letter of recommendation from a mentor or a knowledgeable associate is strongly encouraged. Up to $50 of a grant may be applied toward the costs of attending an appropriate scientific meeting to present results of the project.

Criteria for judging applications include:
— Significance of problem addressed
— Clarity of proposal
— Adequacy of project design
— Adequacy of experience/training
— Adequacy of professional guidance
— Financial need
— Chance for achieving objectives
— Potential benefit to the species/resource
— Potential for advancing career/studies
— Potential for sharing results at a future statewide TOS meeting

The application and letter of recommendation should be emailed (preferably) or mailed to Michael Collins, Department of Biology, Rhodes College, Memphis, TN 38112; collinsm@rhodes.edu. The deadline for receipt of applications is February 1. Applicants will be notified of the Committee's decisions in early March. All grant awards will be announced in *The Tennessee Warbler*.

Respectfully,

Michael Collins

TOS Conservation and Research Funding Committee Chair

Winter Hummingbirds

- Do you have hummingbirds at your feeder **after** November 1st or **before** March 15th?
- Do you see hummingbirds that are **not** ruby-throated during either migration season?

What do you do?

1. Try and get a picture!
2. Contact us at: routledges@bellsouth.net

- If you are willing, we'll travel to your place and attempt to band the hummingbird.
- It will then become part of our ongoing winter hummingbird research.

If you have any questions OR need general information please feel free to reach out to us.

SOUTHEASTERN SEAR AVIAN RESEARCH

IN REMEMBRANCE

William Robert (Rob) Peeples

Rob Peeples of Monticello, Arkansas, died on May 10, 2024, at the age of 60. An avid birdwatcher early in life, Rob joined the Memphis Chapter of the Tennessee Ornithological Society in 1978 and served as Chapter President from 2003-2005. For those who had the privilege of birding with him, Rob's bird identification skills, especially by ear, were astounding.

Rob was the data compiler and author of the 1987 publication, "Birds of Northwest Mississippi – DeSoto, Tate and Tunica Counties Since 1977". This was a Special Project that Rob undertook while a student at Memphis State University. In this publication Rob wrote:

> I would like to express special thanks to the following: my father, William P. Peeples, who began taking me birding to Woodland Lake when I was 13 years old; Ben Coffey and Gilbert Beaver who made available their records for the area; and to Martha Waldron who edited and had published "Seasonal Occurrences of Shelby County, Tennessee Birds" on which this publication was modeled.
>
> It is hoped that this publication will meet its intention of promoting awareness of the area's birdlife and encourage ongoing study.

Rob Peeples worked to increase knowledge about birds and encouraged others to follow that path. We are fortunate to have had Rob as a member of the Tennessee Ornithological Society. Well done, Rob.

On the lookout

Rob Peeples (left), Martha Waldron, Martha Ramley and Dolyann Daily, members of the Memphis ornithological society, look for bird species in a grass field near the Allen Steam Plant in Southwest Memphis. Forty-one thousand bird-watchers throughout the United States and Canada will be counting species until January 3 for the American Audubon Society.

CHAPTER NEWS

BIRDING KINGSPORT's three 2024 Fun Fest bird walks in July were a success. We had a total of 87 birders and guests (including Steve Hanor's daughter, Angela, who lives in Morocco and Susan & Larry Newman visiting from New York). We tallied 47 total species. These walks are great exposure for our chapter, even though we may not think of July as "prime" birding in our area. We hosted a follow-up bird walk on August 2 for the Fun Fest attendees. Three guests and five BK members attended for a good morning of birding at Phipps Bend. We had 45 species, including spotting scope views of a Red-headed Woodpecker and hearing Bobwhite.

Our programs have consisted of "Southern Expansion: How Tree Swallows Beat the Heat" by Elizabeth Derryberry, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Ecology at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and "Improve Your Birdwatching - Birding by Ear" presentation by BK member Bill Grigsby.

We offered "Breakfast & Birds" on the morning of August 12. Seven members enjoyed breakfast at Perkins followed by an easy bird walk on the TVA Trail at Riverbend. We tallied 32 species. A couple folks got a life bird - observing a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in the spotting scope eating a caterpillar. On August 17, ten members and one guest birded at Laurel Run Park. We had 37 species with great looks at a Red-tailed hawk perched nearby the trail. We had a great evening on August 22 for our "Social, Bird Bingo, and Nighthawks". Fifteen folks attended. Thanks to Susan Hubley for hosting fun games of Bird Bingo! Some Nighthawks were visible the next evening.

Seven members went to Sugar Hollow Park in Bristol on September 3. The morning was cool and breezy, but we saw several warbler species. On September 12, Bambi Fincher and Sherrie Quillen led a bird walk at Warriors Path State Park. Nine folks came out and 44 species were tallied, including 11 warbler species. On September 21, Richard & June Siggins led a photography bird walk at the same park. Fifteen participants enjoyed a morning of personalized instruction for cameras as well as cell phones. Four members attended the TOS Fall State Meeting the last weekend in September.

In celebration of World Migratory Bird Day, Bambi Fincher and Sherrie Quillen lead a bird walk with fourteen people on the Kingsport Greenbelt and a hot spot on Wesley Road on October 12. On October 22, we hosted Tim Lenz from Chattanooga. He presented "Birding Tech Evolution: eBird's Impact and Beyond". We invited the local bird clubs. It was very interesting and educational.

Leadership Team

CHATTANOOGA CHAPTER - Thanks to an invitation from Scott Martin, Administrator for Chattanooga's Department of Parks and Outdoors, we've begun working with the city on educational signage for the Brainerd levee. The levee is one of the rare places in the city to observe shore birds, especially during migratory periods. Our goal is to help the public identify birds they may observe on the levee as well as explain a few facts about bird migration. We're grateful for this opportunity for a couple of reasons: it helps us further our mission to educate the public about the avian world around us, and it's an excellent way for us to make our presence known in the city, all of which leads to keeping our club sustainable into the future.

We will be working with Dr. David Aborn to install a Motus Wildlife Tracking System close to where Dr. Aborn does his important bird-banding work at Greenway Farms. As you may know, Motus is an international research network that allows scientists like Dr. Aborn and others to track birds and other small flying animals with great precision, furthering their research and education on the health and well-being of migratory birds. Again, we see this as another way for us to fulfill our mission to promote the study and protection of birds.

For our September meeting, Brian Smith and Anna Mathis of Chattanooga's Department of Parks and Outdoors spoke on the exciting community-driven goal for Chattanooga to become the first National Park City in the United States. Brian is Communications and Marketing Director for Parks and Outdoors, and Anna is the city's Natural Resources Manager.

In October, Dr. David Aborn explained the why and how of the Audubon Society's proposed changes to North American bird names. This was followed by interesting discussions and many questions.

Ann Glass, Newsletter Editor

CHAPTER NEWS

The **HIGHLAND RIM CHAPTER**'s annual August picnic, at the home of Darrell and Jean Gibson, was once again a success. As in years past we were delighted with all the feathered backyard guests and the guests with tails and hoofs. It was nice catching up with our fellow birders.

Our annual September pontoon tour on Tims Ford Lake was blessed with beautiful weather. We had two pontoon boats. Our drivers were Bobby Tucker and Laura Butler. They are both experienced drivers who were able to steer their boats, watch overhead, and point birds out to us. We saw a rookery island that had numerous Cormorants, Anhingas, and hundreds of Black Vultures. Nearing the end of our tour a Great Blue Heron was spotted in the water near the shore. As we neared the shore, we realized she was flapping only one wing because she was tangled! Bobby inched his pontoon closer, and Monica Oosting got up on the front of the boat to use a knife to cut the Great Heron free. Wow, to be at the right place at the right time to help this magnificent bird that was in dire need.

Our October program was presented by Don Hazel, president of the Tennessee Bluebird Society. His presentation, along with a slide show, was about Tennessee bird identification. Our club continues to maintain local bluebird house trails and turn the fledgling reports into the Tennessee State Bluebird Society.

Larry Bowers spotted a mature Bald Eagle on the road feasting on fresh roadkill. The eagle flew away as Larry approached in his vehicle. Approximately an hour later, on Larry's way back, the eagle was still enjoying his feast. Bald eagles are opportunistic scavengers and will eat the carcass of a dead animal when it's available.

In November our member, Richard Candler, presented a fascinating program on area waterbirds in the Highland Rim area. Richard's slide presentation included colorful drawings of a variety of waterbirds. He included the most common ducks in our area: the ones that migrate, and the rare ones. These included Canada Geese, male and female Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teals, Mergansers, Wigeons, Northern Pintail, and different Teals. Richard also talked about Snow Geese, Loons, Coots and Grebes. Two places he suggested for seeing these birds were Woods Reservoir in TN and the marsh at the County Park in Stevenson, AL. Richard co-authored, with Angus Pritchard, a book called *Birding Sewanee*.

Happy Birding!

Janie Denis

MARCH 15TH DEADLINE

The deadline date for the April issue of *The Tennessee Warbler* is March 15th. Please submit all articles, announcements, reports and items of interest by this deadline date.

Submit Material To:
Theresa Graham, Editor
(901) 489-0795
e-mail: 2graham@bellsouth.net

CHAPTER NEWS

The **J. WALLACE COFFEY CHAPTER** (Bristol Bird Club) enjoyed many wonderful field trips and events in the months of July – October. We started off in July with a trip to Roan Mountain for high elevation warblers and other birds. Later in July there were two bird walks on Roan Mountain for the Xtreme Kids Rally led by BBC members, Michele Sparks and David Hollie. This was successful with twenty enthusiastic participants.

Our monthly bird walks continue at Steele Creek Park every second Thursday of the month. Other field trips were to Jacob's Nature Park in Johnson City and the orchard bogs in Shady Valley where a Lark sparrow was found. Both of these walks were in October.

A special outing on August 31 was Nighthawks and Hotdogs at Little Biscuit Mini Farm hosted by Larry and Janet McDaniel. This is always an enjoyable event.

The annual BBC sponsored Mendota Hawk Watch was held on September 14 – 25. It was cut short because of weather conditions due to the effects of hurricane Helene. There were 72 hours of observation time during which a total of 4,108 raptors were counted. Ron Harrington has organized the Hawk Watch for many years.

Our annual banquet was held on September 14 at the Addilynn Methodist Church. The keynote speakers were Ron Hoff and Dollyann Myers, who have birded all over the world. They gave an excellent presentation called Birds of Argentina.

On October 11-12, the annual Steele Creek Park Wildlife Weekend was held with good attendance and lots of activities for children. The Friday evening speaker was Suzanne Stryk who is a very accomplished artist and connects art with nature. Many BBC members volunteer for this event.

At the July BBC meeting our guest speaker was Louis Tester who gave an interesting program titled Dragonflies and Damselflies. Our speaker for August was David Hollie who gave a lively talk entitled Life as a Nomadic Field Biologist. The October program was given by Bryan Stephens and his brother Mark who gave an informative talk entitled Building a Birding Festival. Mark, who is on the tourism board in Georgetown, SC described the new Hammock Coast Birding Festival and all the included areas to visit.

In Memory: George Brewster, a BBC member for many years passed away on August 27 after a brief illness. He and his wife Kera were owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Johnson City and gave programs for our club. He always had a big friendly smile on his face and will be missed.

Judy Moose, Secretary.

The **KNOXVILLE CHAPTER** of the Tennessee Ornithological Society (KTOS) has resumed regular monthly meetings for the Fall season. KTOS had a booth at the annual Hummingbird Festival at Ijams Nature Center on August 17.

Field trips this Summer and Fall seasons were to Rankin Bottoms, Melton Hill, Hawk Watch on the Foothills Parkway, and Kyker Bottoms. The Knox County Fall Count happened on September 22.

On October 22, KTOS members had the pleasure of viewing a special presentation by renowned bird sound recordist and photographer Wil Hershberger titled "A Celebration of Song". The presentation for the regular Fall KTOS meeting in October was done by Todd Freeberg where he presented his research on "Environmental Variation Associated with Anti-Predator Behavior in Mixed-Species Flocks".

KTOS members are looking forward to preparing for upcoming Christmas Bird Counts this winter season.

Stephanie Mueller, Secretary

CHAPTER NEWS

Four **MEMPHIS CHAPTER** members volunteered to lead nature walks in Overton Park for the Overton Park Conservancy's Nature 101 series on September 21. Julia Weil and Caroline Schratz each led birding walks, Amy Balentine led a game of Nature Bingo for kids, and Ryan Pudwell led a walk inspired by nature's choice.

Field Trip Reports

Ensley Bottoms, Sept. 11 (trip leader Dick Preston): Five observers recorded 33 bird species at the TE Maxon waste treatment area. Highlights included Black-necked Stilt, American Avocet, Wilson's Phalarope, Stilt Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Magnolia Warbler, and Yellow Warbler.

Shelby County Fall Count, Sept. 14 (compiled by Dick Preston): Twenty-two observers recorded 109 bird species. The species number was lower than in recent years probably due to the clouds and light rain that were present throughout the morning. Despite the low numbers, some notable species were observed including Red-necked Phalarope and Black-bellied Plover at Ensley Bottoms, White-winged Dove in Millington, TN, and Caspian Tern, Cape May Warbler, and Short-billed Dowitcher at Shelby Farms Park.

Fort Pillow, Sept. 22 (trip leader Dick Preston): Five observers, 31 species. Notable species included Philadelphia vireo.

Wapanocca NWR, Oct. 6 (trip leader Van Harris): Eight observers split into two groups that recorded a total of 46 bird species. Highlights included an Eastern Screech Owl calling in the parking lot, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Great Egret, Bald Eagle, Wild Turkey, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Magnolia, Bay-breasted Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Green Warblers.

W.C. Johnson Park, Oct. 26 (trip leader Chad Brown): Thirteen observers embarked under partly cloudy skies, spotting a range of birds including Bay-breasted Warblers, Kinglets, and various woodpecker species along the boardwalk and Primitive Trail. The group observed resident birds and an unusually high number of Eastern Bluebirds, sparrows, and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Liz Hall, President

It's been another wonderful season for our **NASHVILLE CHAPTER**. Our summer hiatus came to an end with our annual 'Fall Flock' pot-luck celebration at our September meeting. Member Mike Smith presented a wonderful program on his adventures in Belize with his twin daughters.

Our 47th year of Wednesday morning Radnor Lake migration walks began on September 18th with over 125 people attending the 4 walks this season. These walks continue to be an excellent source of outreach. As always, we welcome members and visitors to join us. We thank this season's volunteer leaders – Richard Conners, Kevin Bowden, Susie Russenberger and Danny Shelton.

Our Spring Wednesday walks will begin on April 23rd and go through May 14th. We invite you to join us if you're in the greater Nashville area.

Our Fall Count took place on October 5th. Many thanks to Barbara Harris and Scott Block for coordinating and compiling the results and for all those who got out and help count birds that day.

Quite a few of our members also attended the Fall TOS meeting in Memphis. The weather looked a bit iffy with Hurricane Helene barreling its way towards Tennessee but those who ventured west were treated to a wonderful weekend event none-the-less.

Our 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents, Cherie Parker and Mike Smith, continue to provide our chapter with wonderful monthly programs and field trips. We invite you to join us for any of these activities. Our schedule can always be found on our webpage – www.nashivillebirds.org

Happiest of holidays to everyone.

Until next time,
Happy birding…
Cyndi Routledge, NTOS President